

Abstract

Studies on North American women have shown that personality dispositions in adolescence and young adulthood predict later occupational choice and level of success within the occupation. Assuming that the role of personality is mediated by culture, this study investigates the relative importance that personality and life themes have in (1) determining Hong Kong women's occupational identity as full time workers and homemakers, (2) explaining life satisfaction and general self-efficacy within each occupational identity, and (3) in affecting current personal strivings. One hundred and nineteen 30-55 year-old married women completed a set of personality inventories, a survey on childhood and current life themes. Nine women were invited for structured interviews. Regression analyses led to three major findings. First, only life history indicators predicted occupational identity. Secondly, only life history indicators predicted life satisfaction, while only personality variables predicted self-efficacy. In particular, achievement motivation and autonomy orientation are related to self-efficacy in different ways for homemakers and full time workers: they are beneficial for full time workers and detrimental for homemakers. Furthermore, harmony orientation predicts self-efficacy positively in homemakers and negatively in full time workers. Thirdly, work and finance, family related and personal development strivings are mostly predicted by personality, whereas beauty and health strivings are mostly predicted by life history indicators. Findings illustrate that positive personality dispositions may fail predicting Hong Kong women's occupational identity and life satisfaction within occupation, due to social barriers, personal background and the influence of Chinese culture.